

Yizkor in the Holocaust

**Uri Monson
Prof. David Roskies
Jewish Response to Catastrophe
December 10, 1987**

Introduction

The liturgy presented here is a recreation of the Yizkor service which would have been said on the seventh day of Pesach, following the quelling of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, in another camp. It is assumed that those Jews reciting this Yizkor were aware of the uprising and their own fate as well.

The Yizkor service lends itself to the creation of a response liturgy, due to some of its inherent features. The base of the Yizkor, the individual private memorials, is a longstanding feature of this ceremony. There are numerous versions of the service in which the material surrounding the base differs greatly, consisting of various poems and prayers. It can therefore be assumed that when the Yizkor was recited, relevant passages were added.

This version begins with Psalm 23, which has become a mainstay of the service, due to its references to "the valley of the shadow of death." Following that is the poem This Tragic Hour, a relevant introductory poem. Next begins a section from Job, which has also become a fairly common occurrence in this service. This section is split in two however, as two poems of the Holocaust succeed each half.

It is the next section which constitutes the individual memorials. Here I used the version presented by Rabbi Jules Harlow in his *Machzor*, because it contains the largest number of varied memorials, including one for relatives and friends—a very valuable addition in the time of mass genocide where most of the dead no longer had relatives to memorialize them. Additionally, Harlow includes a memorial for the six-million, a section which would have surely been included as the Jews realized the extent of the destruction they were facing.

The memorials are followed by a poem which emphasizes both the loss of a future-children, and the awareness all sectors of the community of their impending doom. Finally there is the Mourner's Kaddish, but with a twist. In André Schwarz-Bart's "The Last of the Just," the main character says his own Kaddish, in which he mourns for all those in the camps. Following that, is the final prayer, the full Mourner's Kaddish.

In addition to the Harlow *Machzor*, I referred to the *Machzorim* of the Rabbinical Assembly, the Reconstructionist Foundation, Rabbi Phillip Birnbaum, Rinat Yisrael, and Rabbi Morris Silverman. The poem I Have No Prayers Left, appears in the book "Five From the Holocaust," by Rabbi Abraham J. Karp.

This Tragic Hour

This tragic hour grant me the joy and spirit
A palace in a ruined house to see;
Let me each season fill with its own merit
And drive my soul through prison walls still to
be free.

This tragic hour with faith my being nourish
That on the morrow from one tear seven suns
will rise;
That somewhere germinate in weary dust to
flourish
Heroic seeds of mighty men, the powerful and
wise.

This tragic hour let storms, O Thou Who heedest
Cleanse me from stain and from discordant
wrong
Re-forge me even as gold into the form Thou
needest:
Let beauty severed be from dross and what re-
mains be song.

And let me love my wrath's most weary vial,
To bear this rusty woe let me not tire.
This tragic hour, grant me in every trial
To know that life from death is wrung by him
who can aspire.

Vilna ghetto, 26 January 1943

הזכרת נשמות
MEMORIAL SERVICE
FOR
THE DEPARTED

יְיָ רֹעִי לֹא אֶחְסָר.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

בְּנְאוֹת דָּשָׁא יִרְבִּיצֵנִי.

He gives me repose in green meadows.

עַל מֵי מְנוּחוֹת יְנַהֲלֵנִי. וְנִפְשִׁי יִשְׁוֹבֵב.

He leads me beside the still waters to revive my spirit.

יְנַחֲנֵי בְּמַעְגְלֵי-צַדִּיק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ.

He guides me on the right path, for that is His nature.

גַּם כִּי אֵלֶךְ בְּגִיא צְלֻמוֹת

לֹא אִירָא רָע כִּי אַתָּה עִמָּדִי.

Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no harm, for You are with me.

שִׁבְטְךָ וּמַשְׁעֲנֶתְךָ הִמָּה יְנַחֲמֵנִי.

Your staff and Your rod comfort me.

תַּעֲרַךְ לְפָנַי שְׁלֶחַן נֶגַד צָרָרִי.

You prepare a banquet for me in the presence of my foes.

דִּשְׁנָת בְּשֶׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי, כּוֹסֵי רוּיָהּ.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

אֵךְ טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל-יְמֵי חַיִּי.

Surely goodness and kindness shall be my portion
all the days of my life.

וְשָׁבְתִי בְּבַיִת יְיָ לְאָרְךָ יָמִים.

And I shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever.

I am a ghetto-Jew,
Driven, lonely, tired.
My heart is rent and empty,
I have no prayers left.
Grant now my one request . . .
Take from me
The name Man!
Take from me
My tortured soul
That sadness should not
Tear and gnaw it!
Take from me
The hearing of my ears,
I should not hear
The sobbing of ghetto walls!
Take from me sight
I should not see
The barb wire and bridge
O'er which my brothers are driven
. . . How we fall, we sink
Day in, day out . . .

Make me, God:
An ox, a horse, a dog!
An ox -
Serenely munching grass
Not knowing something better
So has rest!
Rest!
A horse -
Who plows the fields
So knows he has some use
Some worth!
Worth!
I want to be a dog
To tear apart, devour your enemies,
With sharp ravening teeth,
Leaving not a scrap,
A bone . . .

Almighty God!
Make of me what you will:
Nothing - or all!
Scatter me in the world's sands.
Bury me in your salty earth,
Change me to a stone . . .

But a man,
A man I can no longer be!

הֲיָה מִה־אָדָם וְתִדְעֶהוּ בֶן־אָנוּשׁ וְתִחַשְׁבֶּהוּ:

*Lord, what is man, that Thou regardest him?
Or the son of man that Thou takest account of him?*

אָדָם לְהִבָּל דָּמָה יָמָיו כְּצֵל עוֹבֵר:

*Man is like a breath,
His days like a fleeting shadow.*

מָה אָנוּשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וּבֶן אָדָם כִּי תִפְקֹדֵנוּ:

וְתִחַשְׁבֶּהוּ מֵעַשׂ מַאֲלֵהִים וְכַבֹּד וְהַדָּר תַּעֲטִבֶהוּ:

*O Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man that Thou thinkest of him?
Yet Thou hast made him but little lower than the angels,
And hast crowned him with glory and honor.*

I HAVE NO PRAYERS LEFT

RIVKA KWIATKOVSKI

Almighty God,
Who from void and nothingness
Didst create the world!
From all creatures
Exalted me
To the heights
of Faith . . .
Blessed me
With the name
Man!
Hear now my plea . . .

Past stairs and courtyards I go running,
Chased by howling enemies.
I hang, at last, a broken bowstring,
And I sing to you-- like this:

Beneath the whiteness of your stars,
Stretch out toward me your white hand;
All my words are turned to tears--
They long to rest within your hand.

Vilna ghetto, 22 May 1943

In memory of a father

יִזְכֵּר אֱלֹהִים וְשִׁמְת אָבִי מוֹרֵי שְׁהֵלָךְ לְעוֹלָמוֹ. הִנְנִי נוֹדֵר [נוֹדֵרְתָּ]
צְדָקָה בְּעַד הַזְכָּרָת וְשִׁמְתוֹ. אָנָּה תְּהִי נִפְשׁוֹ צְרוּרָה בְּצִרוֹר
הַחַיִּים וְתְהִי מְנוּחָתוֹ כְּבוֹד, שְׁבַע שְׂמֵחוֹת אֶת-פְּנֵיךָ, נְעִימוֹת
בִּימִינְךָ נֹצֵחַ. אָמֵן.

May God remember the soul of my father who has gone to his eternal home. In loving testimony to his life I pledge charity to help perpetuate ideals important to him. Through such deeds, and through prayer and memory, is his soul bound up in the bond of life. May I prove myself worthy of the gift of life and the many other gifts with which he blessed me. May these moments of meditation link me more strongly with his memory and with our entire family. May he rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

In memory of a mother

יִזְכֵּר אֱלֹהִים וְשִׁמְת אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי שְׁהֵלְכָה לְעוֹלָמָהּ. הִנְנִי נוֹדֵר
[נוֹדֵרְתָּ] צְדָקָה בְּעַד הַזְכָּרָת וְשִׁמְתָהּ. אָנָּה תְּהִי נִפְשָׁה צְרוּרָה
בְּצִרוֹר הַחַיִּים וְתְהִי מְנוּחָתָה כְּבוֹד, שְׁבַע שְׂמֵחוֹת אֶת-פְּנֵיךָ,
נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נֹצֵחַ. אָמֵן.

יוֹשֵׁב בְּבֵתָר עֲלִיוֹן, בְּצֵל שְׂדֵי יְהוֹלֹקֵן:

אָמַר לַיהוָה, מְחַסֵּי וּמְצֹדֵתִי, אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתָי בּוֹ:

He that dwelleth in the shelter of the Most High,
Abideth under the protection of the Almighty.
I say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress,
My God in whom I trust.

שׁוֹיֵחִי יְיָ לְנֹדֵדֵי חַסִּיד, כִּי מִיְמִינִי כָּל אֲמוֹט:

לְכֹן שָׂמַח לְבִי וַיִּגַּל כְּבוֹדִי, אַף בְּשָׂרִי יִשְׁכֹּן לְבֶטֶח:

I have set the Lord always before me,
Surely He is at my right hand; I shall not fail.
Therefore my heart and soul rejoice,
My flesh also will dwell in safety.

Beneath the Whiteness of Your Stars

Beneath the whiteness of your stars,
Stretch out toward me your white hand;
All my words are turned to tears--
They long to rest within your hand.

See, their brilliant light goes darker
In my eyes, grown cellar-dim;
And I lack a quiet corner
From which to send them back again.

Yet, O Lord, all my desire--
To leave you with my wealth of tears.
In me, there burns an urgent fire,
And in the fire, there burn my days.

Rest, in every hole and cellar
Weeps, as might a murderer.
I run the rooftops, even higher,
And I search-- where are you? Where?

In memory of a son

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים נְשִׁמַת בְּנֵי הָאָהוּב מִחֲמַד עֵינֵי שְׁהִלָּךְ לְעוֹלָמוֹ.
הִנְנִי נוֹדֵר [נוֹדֶרֶת] צְדָקָה בְּעַד הַזְכָּרָת נְשִׁמַתוֹ. אָנָּה תְּהִי נִפְשׁוֹ
צְרוּרָה בְּצָרוֹר הַחַיִּים וְתְּהִי מְנוּחָתוֹ כְּבוֹד, שְׁבַע שְׂמֵחוֹת אֶת-
פְּנֵיךָ, נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נֹצֵחַ. אָמֵן.

May God remember the soul of my beloved son who has gone to his eternal home. In loving testimony to his life I pledge charity to help perpetuate ideals important to him. Through such deeds, and through prayer and memory, is his soul bound up in the bond of life. I am grateful for the sweetness of his life and for what he did accomplish. May he rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

In memory of a daughter

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים נְשִׁמַת בְּתֵי הָאָהוּבָה מִחֲמַד עֵינֵי שְׁהִלָּכָה לְעוֹלָמָה.
הִנְנִי נוֹדֵר [נוֹדֶרֶת] צְדָקָה בְּעַד הַזְכָּרָת נְשִׁמַתָּה. אָנָּה תְּהִי
נִפְשָׁה צְרוּרָה בְּצָרוֹר הַחַיִּים וְתְּהִי מְנוּחָתָה כְּבוֹד, שְׁבַע שְׂמֵחוֹת
אֶת פְּנֵיךָ, נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נֹצֵחַ. אָמֵן.

May God remember the soul of my beloved daughter who has gone to her eternal home. In loving testimony to her life I pledge charity to help perpetuate ideals important to her. Through such deeds, and through prayer and memory, is her soul bound up in the bond of life. I am grateful for the sweetness of her life and for what she did accomplish. May she rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

In memory of other relatives and friends

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים נְשִׁמוֹת קְרוּבֵי וְרַעֲי שְׁהִלְכוּ לְעוֹלָמָם. הִנְנִי נוֹדֵר
[נוֹדֶרֶת] צְדָקָה בְּעַד הַזְכָּרָת נְשִׁמוֹתֵיהֶם. אָנָּה תְּהִינֶנּוּ נִפְשׁוֹתֵיהֶם
צְרוּרוֹת בְּצָרוֹר הַחַיִּים וְתְּהִי מְנוּחָתָם כְּבוֹד, שְׁבַע שְׂמֵחוֹת
אֶת-פְּנֵיךָ, נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נֹצֵחַ. אָמֵן.

May God remember the soul of my mother who has gone to her eternal home. In loving testimony to her life I pledge charity to help perpetuate ideals important to her. Through such deeds, and through prayer and memory, is her soul bound up in the bond of life. May I prove myself worthy of the gift of life and the many other gifts with which she blessed me. May these moments of meditation link me more strongly with her memory and with our entire family. May she rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

In memory of a husband

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים נְשִׁמַת בְּעֲלֵי שְׁהִלָּךְ לְעוֹלָמוֹ. הִנְנִי נוֹדֶרֶת צְדָקָה בְּעַד
הַזְכָּרָת נְשִׁמַתוֹ. אָנָּה תְּהִי נִפְשׁוֹ צְרוּרָה בְּצָרוֹר הַחַיִּים וְתְּהִי מְנוּחָתוֹ
כְּבוֹד, שְׁבַע שְׂמֵחוֹת אֶת-פְּנֵיךָ, נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נֹצֵחַ. אָמֵן.

May God remember the soul of my husband who has gone to his eternal home. In loving testimony to his life I pledge charity to help perpetuate ideals important to him. Through such deeds, and through prayer and memory, is his soul bound up in the bond of life. Love is strong as death, deep bonds of love are indissoluble. The memory of our companionship and love leads me out of loneliness into all that we shared which still endures. May he rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

In memory of a wife

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים נְשִׁמַת אִשְׁתִּי שְׁהִלָּכָה לְעוֹלָמָה. הִנְנִי נוֹדֵר צְדָקָה בְּעַד
הַזְכָּרָת נְשִׁמַתָּה. אָנָּה תְּהִי נִפְשָׁה צְרוּרָה בְּצָרוֹר הַחַיִּים וְתְּהִי
מְנוּחָתָה כְּבוֹד, שְׁבַע שְׂמֵחוֹת אֶת-פְּנֵיךָ, נְעִימוֹת בִּימִינְךָ נֹצֵחַ. אָמֵן.

May God remember the soul of my wife who has gone to her eternal home. In loving testimony to her life I pledge charity to help perpetuate ideals important to her. Through such deeds and through prayer and memory is her soul bound up in the bond of life. "Many women have done superbly, but you surpass them all." Love is strong as death, deep bonds of love are indissoluble. The memory of our companionship and love leads me out of loneliness into all that we shared which still endures. May she rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

Exalted, compassionate God, grant perfect peace in Your sheltering Presence, among the holy and the pure, to the souls of all our brethren, men, women and children of the House of Israel who were slaughtered and burned. May their memory endure, inspiring truth and loyalty in our lives. May their souls thus be bound up in the bond of life. May they rest in peace. And let us say: Amen.

In memory of all the dead

אל מלא רחמים שוכן במרומים המצא מנוחה נכונה תחת כנפי השכינה במעלות קדושים וטהורים כזהר הרקיע מזהירים את-נשמות כל-אלה שהזכרנו היום לברכה שהלכו לעולמם, בגן עדן תהי מנוחתם. אנא בעל הרחמים, הסתירם בסתר כנפיד לעולמים וצרר בצרור החיים את-נשמותיהם. יי הוא נחלתם, ויגוחו בשלום על משכבותיהם. ונאמר אמן.

Exalted, compassionate God, grant perfect peace among the holy and the pure, in Your sheltering Presence, to the souls of all our beloved who have gone to their eternal home. May their memory endure as inspiration for deeds of charity and goodness in our lives. May their souls thus be bound up in the bond of life. May they rest in peace. And let us say: Amen.

A little garden,
Fragrant and full of roses.
The path is narrow
And a little boy walks along it.

A little boy, a sweet boy,
Like that growing blossom.
When the blossom comes to bloom,
The little boy will be no more.

**-Written by Frantisek Bass, who died
in Auschwitz at the age of 14.**

May God remember the soul of _____ and of all relatives and friends who have gone to their eternal home. In loving testimony to their lives I pledge charity to help perpetuate ideals important to them. Through such deeds, and through prayer and memory, are their souls bound up in the bond of life. May these moments of meditation link me more strongly with their memory. May they rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

In memory of martyrs

יזכר אלהים נשמות כל-אחינו בני ישראל שמסרו את-נפשם על קדוש השם. הנני נודר ונודרת צדקה בעד הזכרת נשמותיהם. אנא ישמע בחיינו הד גבורתם ומסירותם ויראה במעשינו טהר לבם ותהינה נפשותיהם צרורות בצרור החיים ותהי מנוחתם כבוד, שבע שמחות את-פניך, געמות בימיך נצח. אמן.

May God remember the souls of our brethren, martyrs of our people, who gave their lives for the sanctification of His name. In their memory do I pledge charity. May their bravery, dedication and purity be reflected in our lives. May their souls be bound up in the bond of life. And may they rest eternally in dignity and peace. Amen.

In memory of the six million

אל מלא רחמים שוכן במרומים המצא מנוחה נכונה תחת כנפי השכינה במעלות קדושים וטהורים כזהר הרקיע מזהירים את-נשמות כל-אחינו בני ישראל, אנשים נשים וטף, שנהרגו ושנטבחו ושנשרפו ושנחנקו. בגן עדן תהי מנוחתם. אנא בעל הרחמים, הסתירם בסתר כנפיד לעולמים וצרר בצרור החיים את-נשמותיהם. יי הוא נחלתם, ויגוחו בשלום על משכבותיהם. ונאמר אמן.

And praised. Auschwitz. Be. Maidanek. The Lord. Treblinka.
And praised. Buchenwald. Be. Mauthausen. The Lord. Belzec.
And praised. Sobibor. Be. Chelmno. The Lord. Bergen-Belsen.
And praised. Ponary. Be. Skarzysko. The Lord. Theresienstadt.
And praised. Vilna. Be. Warsaw. The Lord. Janow. And
praised. Dora. Be. Neuengamme. The Lord. Pustkow. And
praised. Dachau. Be. Yanovsky-Lagar. Amen.

Glorified and sanctified be His great name in the world
which He has created according to His will. May He establish
His kingdom during your life and during your days, and
during the life of all the house of Israel, speedily and soon,
and say ye, Amen.

Let His great name be blessed for ever and to all
eternity.

Blessed, praised and glorified, exalted, adored and hon-
ored, extolled and lauded be the name of the Holy One,
blessed be He; though He be high above all the blessings
and hymns, praises and words of solace which are uttered in
the world; and say ye, Amen.

May abundant peace and life descend from heaven upon
us and upon all Israel; and say ye, Amen.

May He who makes peace in His heights bring peace
upon us and upon all Israel; and say ye, Amen.

יתגדל אוישוויץ. ויתקדש. מאידאנעק. שמה רבא. טרעבלינקע.
יתגדל בוכנוואלד. ויתקדש. מאטהאוזן. שמה רבא. בעלושעץ. יתגדל.
סאביבאר. ויתקדש. כעלמנא. שמה רבא. בערגן-בעלזן. יתגדל. פאנאר.
ויתקדש. סקארזשיסקא. שמה רבא. בערגן-בעלזן. יתגדל. יאנאו.
ויתקדש. דארא. שמה רבא. נוינגאמע. יתגדל. פוסטקאו. ויתקדש.
דאכאו. שמה רבא. יאנווסקי-לאגער. אמן

יתגדל ויתקדש שמה רבא. בעלמא די-ברא כרעותה.
ותמליך מלכותה בתיכון ובימיכון ובתמי דכל-בית
ישראל בעגלא ובזמן קריב. ואמרו אמן:

יהא שמה רבא מקברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמאי:

יתקברך וישתבח ויחפאר ויתרמם ויתנשא ויתגדר
ויתעלה ויתהלל שמה דיקדשא. בריך הוא. לעלא ולעלא
מן כל-ברכתא ושירתא תשבחתא ונחמתא דאמירן
בעלמא. ואמרו אמן:

יהא שלמא רבא מן שמאי וחיים עלינו ועל-כל-
ישראל. ואמרו אמן:

עשה שלום במרומו הוא יעשה שלום עלינו ועל-כל-
ישראל. ואמרו אמן: